



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/628,217	07/28/2003	Thomas D. Erickson	YOR920030090US1	5463
877	7590	09/20/2007		
IBM CORPORATION, T.J. WATSON RESEARCH CENTER P.O. BOX 218 YORKTOWN HEIGHTS, NY 10598			EXAMINER KIANERSI, MITRA	
			ART UNIT 2145	PAPER NUMBER
			MAIL DATE 09/20/2007	DELIVERY MODE PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

10/628,217

Applicant(s)

ERICKSON ET AL.

Examiner

Mitra Kianersi

Art Unit

2145

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 27 July 2007.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 07272007 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)                     | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                      |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)          | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

### *Response to Arguments*

Applicant's arguments filed 04/17/2007 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Paragraph [A]: applicant on page 13 argues that Donath does not teach or suggest automatic monitoring to determine if meeting phases have been completed and taking actions responding to the monitoring results. Donath does not teach or suggest active phases and role restrictions for input to the on-line meeting and does not teach or suggest providing an on-line agenda-driven meeting service. Examiner's reply: Donath is disclosing a visualization conversation method which in fact overcomes the present invention, because it increases the ability of computer mediated discussion to carry subtler and more nuanced messages both by giving people a richer environment in which to interact and by providing them with greater insight into underlying social patterns of their virtual community. Donath's invention provides graphical interface for synchronous conversation and loom which is visualization of threaded are key issues in generation, design and use of graphical interface for persistent conversation, Fig.1 is a text based chat which display the participant's comments in a linear stream, each user upon entering the system each user chooses a unique color, which is used as a marker of identity which is marked by location, for those participants who tend to remain in the same spot for extended periods of time, also in Donath's invention one sees who are the active, animated participants and one can watch the emergence and dissolution of conversational groups. The goal of Chat Circles is to improve the experience of multi-user real-time mediated conversation, in chat circles, the salient visual data, circle location and size is generated by the participants in the course of their interactions with each other and loom on the hand creates its visualization by analyzing and categorizing the archives of a newsgroup. People worldwide participate in Usenet newsgroups, all sharing a common text-based standard. The visualization must extract the data from the existing textual material.

Paragraph [B]: applicant on page 12 argues that the Donath reference neither teaches nor suggests creating an instance of an-line meeting. Examiner's reply: The loom

visualizations are derived from basic data about the message like the author time and subject and nothing is known about the message content. Other than some characteristics from these message sending patterns, this data can provide only a limited view of the style and structure of the group and in order to attain a deeper and more nuanced picture, it is necessary to look at the content of the messages themselves.

Because the arguments with respect to the allowableness of independent claims were found unpersuasive, these same arguments are not persuasive with respect to the other dependent claims.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over (MIT Media Lab, Visualizing Conversation by Judith Donath et al., July 2003).

Claims 1 and 16: An article of manufacture in computer readable form comprising computer readable program code means stored for performing in a computer system a method for providing an online collaborative environment for at least one user, (chat circles, a graphical interface for synchronous conversation and loom which is visualization of threaded are key issues in generation, design and use of graphical interface for persistent conversation, page 2) computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect the method comprising the steps of:

a) creating an instance of an online meeting, the instance including phases, and an agenda of the meeting's phases; (fig. 1, is a text based chat which display the participant's comments in a linear stream, page 3)

Art Unit: 2145

b) receiving input from at least one user;(upon entering the system each user chooses a unique color, which is used as a marker of identity, (page 5, lines 1-2), identity is also marked by location, for participants will tend to remain in the same spot for extended periods of time. Page 5, lines 13-15)

c) depicting said input in a graphical representation including a set of objects; (with every user's history displayed on the screen, lurkers as well as those who dominate conversation are recognizable. The interface creates a snapshot of an entire conversation in one image. (Page 6, lines 27-30)

d) forwarding said representation to said at least one user. (the renderings reveal patterns indicative of a person's role in the community and the type of discussion prevalent in a particular group, page 7).

Although Donath et al. do not explicitly teach each and every element of claimed invention, however Donath teach a graphical interface for synchronous conversation and Loom, a visualization of threaded discussion, which explores key issues in the generation, design and use of graphical interfaces for persistent conversations.

Therefore, it is obvious for an ordinary skill in the art to employ a system like the prior art to increase the ability of computer mediated discussion to carry subtler and more nuanced messages both by giving people a richer environment in which to interact and by providing them with greater insight into the underlying social patterns of their virtual community.

Claims 2 and 17: An article wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

-automatically determining if all meeting phases have been completed; (chat circles 3 is a graphical interface for synchronous communications that does not make use of representational graphics. Page 4)

If all meeting phases have been completed, terminating the meeting instance; (while one can see all the participants at once, one can only hear of those one is sufficiently close to. Viewed over time chat circles creates a visual record of conversational patterns, one sees who are the active, animated participants and one can watch the emergence and dissolution of conversational groups. Page 4)

Art Unit: 2145

If all meeting phases have not been completed, repeating steps b) - d) until all phases specified in said agenda are completed. (the key features of on-line conversation is persistence and that they bring persistence to the more ephemeral synchronous chats, page 2)

Claims 3 and 18: An article wherein the step of depicting includes an indication of said at least one user's activity, based on a comparison of said activity with a criterion. (while one can see all the participants at once, one can only hear of those one is sufficiently close to. Viewed over time chat circles creates a visual record of conversational patterns, one sees who are the active, animated participants and one can watch the emergence and dissolution of conversational groups. Page 4)

Claims 4 and 19: An article wherein said user input is selected from the group comprising a query, a response, a text comment, and a task specification; and wherein said representation includes a handle to said input, which can later be used to retrieve said input. (Related work in information retrieval includes recognizing the point of view of a message, page 10)

Claims 5 and 20: An article including means for providing a dynamic determination of the next active phase based on at least one of results and analysis of participation of previous phase(s). (loom uses a simple decision making algorithm that classifies each message, page 10)

Claims 6 and 21: An article wherein said at least one user is assigned a role and the type of input and associated phase in which input can be given is restricted by the role. (the renderings in loom reveal patterns indicative of a person's role in the community and the type of the discussion prevalent in a particular group, page 7)

Claims 7 and 22: An article wherein an active phase is emphasized in a visual representation of the meeting. (Loom5 is a visualization tool for Usenet groups and creates visualizations of the participants and interactions in a threaded newsgroup, page 7)

Claims 8 and 23: An article of providing a transition from one phase to an earlier phase in said agenda; and providing at least one of a graphic representation of one or more interactions of a given loop; and means for enabling said at least one user to review an

earlier iteration of said loop. (in the conversational interface each person who is connected to the chat's server appear as a circle. When the user posts a message, their circle grows and accommodates the text inside it. Page 4)

Claims 9 and 24: An article according to claim 1, wherein said representation includes both graphic and text section and where the content of said text section is automatically adjusted to match user selection of the point of focus in the graphic section. (while one can see all the participants at once, one can only hear of those one is sufficiently close to. Viewed over time chat circles creates a visual record of conversational patterns, one sees who are the active, animated participants and one can watch the emergence and dissolution of conversational groups).

Claims 10 and 25: An article according including showing in said graphic section said at least one user's visiting a previous or future phase. (one sees who are the active, animated participants and one can watch the emergence and dissolution of conversational groups, page 4)

Claims 11 and 26: An article according to claim 9, including means for setting status of objects in said graphic representation to one or more of: Open/Locked; New Information/Seen; Glitter/No Glitter. (this step is content patterns provided by loom visualization which is an approach to visualizing the messages by classifying them into categories which are then displayed as color-coded dots, or any other set of content-based patterns. Page 9)

Claim 12: A system for providing an instance of an online collaborative meeting for at least one user, the system comprising: a) a database that provides persistent access to data; b) a server that enables the creation of an instance of an agenda driven meeting and that receives all meeting inputs, automatically tracks phases of said meeting, logs said inputs in said database, updates a representation of said instance, and forwards the representation to said at least one user; and c) a graphical user interface accessible to at least one client enabling said at least one user to enter an input and receive said representation. (the abstract graphics of chat circles lends itself to creating a visual archive, one that is self-documenting in its highlighting of salient events, page 6)

Art Unit: 2145

Claim 13: A system wherein the server is a web-portal and said receiving and forwarding is performed using the HTTP protocol. (like text-based chat displays, fig.1)

Claim 14: A system further comprising an archiving component for creating an archive version of the completed meeting instance. (the graphical interface to the chat circles archives, fig. 4)

Claim 15: A system wherein said graphical user interface further comprises means for: - a retrieval feature for said at least one user to retrieve said meeting archive; and at least one user to replay meeting instance, replay including at least one of the instances phases. (the abstract graphics of chat circles lends itself to creating a visual archive, one that is self-documenting in its highlighting of salient events, page 6)

Claim 27: A method enabling a service organization to give a customer organization the ability to use Agenda-Driven Meetings, the method consisting of the following steps: ensuring the customer organization has the hardware and software required to host the Agenda-Driven Meeting service, including a database; determining meeting types that are useful for said customer organization; Adding templates for said meeting types to said database. (the abstract graphics of chat circles lends itself to creating a visual archive, one that is self-documenting in its highlighting of salient events, page 6)

Claim 28: A system further comprising of the service organization providing at least one of said upgrades, or new templates useful to said customer. (Conversation Landscape is designed to reveal the interaction patterns of the conversation at a glance. Clusters of activity - logins and log-outs, flurries of animated discussion - become evident as do periods of silence. With every user's history displayed on the screen, lurkers as well as those who dominate conversations are recognizable. The interface creates a snapshot of an entire conversation in one image. Page 6)

Claim 29: A method wherein said upgrades and additions are provided by said service organization to said customer organization periodically. (Conversation Landscape is designed to reveal the interaction patterns of the conversation at a glance. Clusters of activity - logins and log-outs, flurries of animated discussion - become evident as do periods of silence. With every user's history displayed on the screen, lurkers as well as



those who dominate conversations are recognizable. The interface creates a snapshot of an entire conversation in one image. Page 6)

Claim 30: An article including means for enabling a given user to participate in a given instance of an online meeting either synchronously or asynchronously. (Chat circles 3 are a graphical interface for synchronous communications that a colored circle on the screen represents each participant. Page 4)

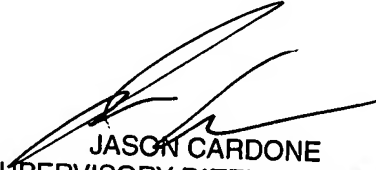
### ***Conclusion***

**THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mitra Kianersi whose telephone number is (571) 272-3915. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:00AM-4:00PM.

Mitra Kianersi  
09/14/2007

  
JASON CARDONE  
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER